

Canary Islands recover Orone tomatoes after eight years of research

After eight years of research, recovery and improvement, the first Orone tomato harvests are already on the market. It is a variety that has not been cultivated in the Canaries since the 1970's, but which is in a position to compete with any other tomato marketed in the Islands, mainly because its nutritional values, colour, smell and taste are far superior to any other.

In 2009, the R&D department of Cultivation and Agricultural Technology of Tenerife (Cultesa), together with the University of La Laguna (ULL) and the Agricultural Biodiversity Centre of Tenerife, started a pioneering research project in the Canary Islands for the selection and improvement of traditional tomato varieties; for three years, these were characterised morphologically and bromatologically and there was an agronomic and organoleptic evaluation of 57 varieties of local tomatoes cultivated in the Islands at least until the seventies, and whose seeds were stored in the National Germplasm Bank, explains Leonardo Amador, head of this department at Cultesa.

"We didn't know whether they were productive varieties or whether they had a good taste or not. We only knew what kind of tomatoes they were and where they were grown, but after the first analyses, we were certain that the Orone variety, grown in Valle Gran Rey, La Gomera, was the most interesting and that's why we focused on its selection and improvement," explains Amador, while acknowledging that "it has been hard work, with a lot of data analysis and a great investment," but which has resulted in us obtaining the first commercial tomato variety registered in the Canary Islands.

Cultesa is the producer and breeder of this variety and, therefore, the one allowed to reproduce and sell this variety, which is already being grown by producers in various islands with "very good results." The Orone also offers "ample gastronomic possibilities," assures Leonardo Amador.

In 2013, with the project for the selection and improvement of traditional Canary tomato varieties already completed, Cultesa asked the Ministry of Agriculture to register the Orone as a commercial and protected variety. This was granted in March this year and the product is

already marketed as a local, differentiated and high quality variety. The Orone has a high lycopene content, and since it has a lower water content, it provides more nutrients.

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